

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PBOR, PINS, TH

SUBJECT: COMMUNIST ATTACK IN TRAT PROVINCE

REF: BANGKOK 10508

1. IN THE MOST DAMAGING ATTACK EVER RECORDED IN TRAT PROVINCE, COMMUNIST INSURGENTS ON APRIL 15 ATTACKED BORDER PATROL POLICE OUTPOST AT BAN PA-AR, TAMBON BO PLOI IN BO RAI SUB-DISTRICT, DURING THE ATTACK AND A FOLLOW-ON AMBUSH FIVE THAI OFFICIALS WERE KILLED, INCLUDING THE PROVINCIAL POLICE CHIEF, A RANKING PROVINCIAL OFFICIAL AND THREE POLICEMEN. THE ASSISTANT GOVERNOR WAS ALSO WOUNDED IN THE AMBUSH. PROVINCIAL POLICE CHIEF COLONEL RANGSI SUWANNANONT WAS THE SECOND PROVINCIAL POLICE SUPERINTENDANT KILLED BY TERRORISTS IN TWO WEEKS. SATURDAY'S INCIDENT FOLLOWED THE DEATH EARLIER THIS MONTH OF SATUN PROVINCIAL POLICE CHIEF COLONEL SUKHUM IEMCHAROEN. THE ATTACK AGAINST THE OUTPOST WAS THE FIFTH IN RECENT WEEKS.

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2. INITIAL REPORTS INDICATED THAT THE ATTACK WAS ANOTHER IN A SUCCESSION OF COORDINATED ATTACKS BY THE KHMER ROUGE AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THAILAND (OR SIEM ORGANIZATION). HOWEVER POLICE DIRECTOR GENERAL MONTHCHAI PANGKONGCHUEN, WHO FLEW TO THE SCENE APRIL 16, AND THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR WERE QUOTED IN THE PRESS AS STATING THAT THE ATTACKERS WERE THAI COMMUNISTS ONLY. THE

OUTPOST IS TWELVE KILOMETERS FROM THE CAMBODIAN BORDER.

3. RTG FLEW IN TWO MARINE AIRCRAFT AND A LARGE CONTINGENT OF MARINES TO SEARCH FOR THE ATTACKERS AND BOOST MORALE IN THE PROVINCE. GENERAL MONTCHAI ALSO SAID HE HAD ORDERED BPP REPLACEMENTS TO BOLSTER DEFENSES. EARLY REPORTS INDICATED THAT THE MARINES HAD THUS FAR HAD NO CONTACT WITH THE COMMUNIST INSURGENTS.

4. COMMENT: WHETHER OR NOT KHMER ROUGE WERE INVOLVED IN THE ATTACK, THE INCIDENT, FOLLOWING A STRING OF BORDER CLASHES AND ABDUCTIONS (REFTEL), WILL HEIGHTEN FEARS OF CITIZENS THE LENGTH OF THE 500 MILE LONG THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER THAT THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT FULLY PROTECT CITIZENS IN THE BORDER AREAS. EMBASSY WAS TOLD BY A SENIOR SUPREME COMMAND OFFICIAL LAST WEEK THAT THE RTG IS MAKING FURTHER PLANS TO BEEF UP BORDER SECURITY THROUGH JOIN CIVILIAN DEFENSE COMMITTEES AND TRAINING AND WEAPONS FOR LOCAL DEFENSE FORCES. EFFECTIVENESS REMAINS TO BE SEEN.
WHITEHOUSE

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